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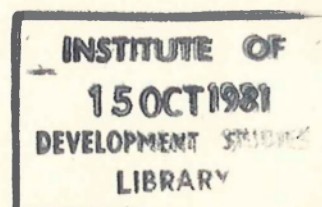
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EMPLOYMENT CREATION IN LIGHT OF THE NEW REPORT
OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL
OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

By

O.N. GAKURU
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(b) INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
(a) UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
P.O. BOX 30197
NAIROBI, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates the potential contribution the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies Report 1976 (NCEOP) is likely to make in creating employment.

A brief review of the labour market is presented. This is followed by a discussion on the structural problems that Kenya encounters in harnessing the resources particularly labour, for productive purposes. The role of education in employment creation is also examined. It is strongly suggested that the lack of employment is not an educational problem. Rather, the main causes of unemployment are rooted in the basic structure of the society.

In the broad context of employment creation, the NCEOP is seen as recommending marginal alterations on the existing educational structure and curricular which have extremely limited employment outcomes for the school leavers. Other issues that are either explicitly or implicitly included in the NCEOP report, such as the potential beneficiaries of the proposed educational changes, and the restructuring of the value patterns of the school leavers on the basis of traditional philosophies are also discussed.

EMPLOYMENT CREATION IN LIGHT OF THE NEW REPORT OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES."

INTRODUCTION

The history of unemployment and lack of gainful employment in Kenya is fairly clear to be repeated in detail in this discussion. We shall only therefore briefly look at some of the important aspects of the problem of employment and unemployment. A review of general issues that relate to employment creation should help us to assess the contribution of the new Education Report 1976 (Gacathi Report)¹, is likely to make in creation of employment opportunities, thus solving the unemployment problem currently facing this country.

The International Labour Institute report on Employment, Incomes, and Equality in Kenya (I.L.O. 1972)², estimated a total of 4.4 million adults. Out of this total, 304,000 were in formal employment in towns. The other major source of employment opportunities in the urban areas were the informal activities such as the auto repairs and the open food kiosks. In Nairobi, for example, 20 per cent of the income earning opportunities consisted of a wide range of these informal and poorly paid activities. This proportion however, was higher in other urban centres where restrictions on the informal sector are less severe.

The farms and the services in the rural areas provide more employment opportunities than the towns. Indeed, 90 per cent of the population in Kenya continue to live in the rural areas. However, the income earning opportunities available in the countryside differ a great deal. Some families barely subsist on their own particularly during drought while others are affluent farmers capable of generating surplus wealth from their farm holdings. Thus there is in the rural areas first, a wealthy class of farmers involved in large-scale and estate farming in the former European settled areas. Secondly, there are about 225,000 small-scale farmers who earn a relatively high income and are mainly found in the high potential areas. Their cash incomes are derived from the sale of cash crops, livestock, maize and dairy products. The main source of labour to work on these farms is the family. People are

*. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Annual General Meeting of the National Christian Council of Kenya (NCCCK) on July 5, 1978.

1. Republic of Kenya. The Report of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies. The Government Printer, Nairobi December 1976.

2. International Labour Office Geneva. Employment, Incomes and Equality: a Strategy for Increasing Productive Employment in Kenya. 1972.

also hired to replace the manual labour of the family particularly when the owner has found a more rewarding venture for his time than labouring on his own farm. Another 250,000 smallholders have only been able to commercialise their farm activities and are able to raise a very low income of between shs. 1,200/= to shs. 2,200/= per year.

The farming families however, who lack the ability to raise the productivity of their land more than marginally are the largest category totalling at least 620,000 units. The income from farming their own land is estimated as less than shs. 1,200 per year including the value of food crops. These families are basically poor and where possible seek employment outside their farm-holdings. In addition, there at least 300,000 landless families.

Wage employment is the other source of income in rural areas besides owning land. In 1972, there were a total of 657,000 regular employees and an additional 226,000 casual labourers. The sources of these jobs were the small-holdings, small-scale rural enterprises, the large-scale farms, commerce and services. The average earnings of the employees are generally very low, barely shs. 800/= per year.

The above figures show that the majority of families in Kenya, most of whom are found in the rural areas are only able to raise subsistence. Furthermore, there are times, for instance during drought, when some of these families are not only unable to fulfil their subsistence needs but also become exposed to a general deprivation of basic necessities of life. Thus, poverty is a real problem for thousands of families in this country with undeveloped small landholdings, poorly paid wage employment and particularly the families that are deprived of both land and wage employment.

In 1965, there were at least 150,000 people who would have taken a job if a reasonable chance was offered. At the same time, it was estimated that about 64,500 pupils who left primary schools in 1965 were unemployed. Indeed, in the report 'After School What' (1966)³ it was estimated that in the light of unemployment problem, Kenya needed 85,000 vacancies a year to preempt the primary school leaver problem. The report however, doubted the

3. The National Christian Council of Kenya. After School What. 1966.

possibility of creating that many jobs because creating employment in the formal sector is very expensive and may cost as much as Shs. 200,000/= to create one job.

Employment Creation

Creating employment may either be expensive or cheap depending on the choice of technology. The industrial sector in Kenya is capital intensive. The rapid growth of industrial productivity has had very little effect on employment. The alternative labour-intensive technology where capital per employee would be initially low and not increase over time or increase more slowly than under the capital intensive alternative has not been used so far because the pattern and structure of industrial development in Kenya is controlled and dependent on international capital. In this country therefore, the process of generating material wealth is characterised by a production process that saves on labour, both men and women, by using more machines.

The use of more machines in producing goods and services could be justified on the basis that high profits would be invested to create more employment and national wealth. Evidence however, shows that a very high proportion of the wealth made as company profits by the large foreign and private companies using capital intensive technology is repatriated instead of being invested in Kenya as shown in table 1.

Table 1.

Outflow of dividends and retention of profits on foreign equity
(all foreign investments) 1967-1970⁴

<u>Item</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>
Outflow of dividends (million shillings)	85,340	82,540	115,140	160,340
Ratio of foreign profits retained to total profits on foreign equity (%)	53	65	54	54

Source: I.L.O. Report (1972) p. 136.

4. The wealth that the foreign companies repatriate is more than the figures given in the I.L.O. Report. For instance, there is a local branch of a multinational which underprices its products before they are exported to another branch of the same company. The goods are then sold at their market price once they are out of the country.

The consumption pattern of the rich continues to be import oriented consisting of mainly luxurious cars, musical instruments, dress, etc. Indeed, it is fashionable for the elite families to own at least one or two cars. The reasons are that going to work, sending children to school and picking them later in the day is impossible without a car. This is deductive thinking by the wealthy who justify their wasteful practices. The question is why do they send children to schools far away from home? The answer is simple; the nearby schools are poor former African schools which makes it necessary to send children to high quality primary or nursery schools further down the road. The children who attend the expensive schools far away from home may also come from the families that wear imported dresses from St. Michael's or that other shop in a London street near where the Queen buys her christmas gifts. The head of the family may also hold an important position either in politics, civil service, industry or church.

There are many different ways of illustrating the modern sector: its high and regular incomes, beautiful and fast moving cars, elegant dress, delicious meals, spacious residence and contact with the outside world. This sector, whose historical origins is racial and colonial was established after heroic resistance by the local societies such as the Nandi. It was established through use of force, church, school and the industrial material goods and services that it offered. To-day, the material and social attributes of the coloniser have been accepted. The industrial products and the concomitant values have been accepted as superior to the traditional patterns of material production and the related social structures and values. This qualitative social change is best illustrated by the expressed needs of good quality medicine, better dwelling, controlled physical environment, mechanised transport, schooling, and the supporting cultural practices such as sport, western mode of dress and beliefs.

The view that there are some Kenyans who are traditional and others modern is false and mystifies the fundamental fact that every Kenyan is in search of better living conditions characterised by the material and social wealth that is heavily concentrated in the urban centres or a package that an individual derives from a modern sector job. Historically, the people who remained in the rural communities were worse off than the migrants into

the towns and the colonial farms or those who secured jobs in the colonial administration as teachers, clerks, court elders, askaris, headmen and chiefs. Indeed, some of the early accumulators of wealth were the colonial chiefs who took advantage of the new socio-economic relations by buying land from poor and ignorant subjects.

The status of general poverty in the rural communities relative to the modern sector was alleviated to an extent by the introduction of liberal postwar policies. For instance, the Swynnerton Plan (1953)⁵ allowed income generating agricultural reforms in the African reserves. However, only a small proportion, as we have seen already, benefitted from these changes. This group went into cash crop production, dairy farming, commerce and transport. These changes were introduced at a time when the nationalist resistance to colonial domination was intense, mainly to defuse the explosive frustrations that the colonial structures had generated among the African population by denying them a share of both state power and national wealth. The outcome, however, was not only political but economic. Growing of cash crops and access to finance capital contributed a great deal to the creation of a class of small scale farmers. The Report of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies (NCEOP) is ideally right to recommend that improved and new activities on land and rural services by both the rich and poor farmers would create jobs for school leavers. This proposition however, has very little applied value as we shall see later.

The Unemployed

The structure of the process that creates employment opportunities in this country for some people, also creates unemployment or poverty for others. Long before school leavers started roaming in towns unemployed, the favourable income earning opportunities in large towns had attracted more rural adults than the available jobs. Indeed, the colonial government had to institute stern measures against the urban unemployed. The African government views the unemployed similarly but it is more restrained in harassing them. The growth of the informal sector has contributed a great deal in reducing the problem of unemployment. In Nairobi, for example, 20 per cent of the income earning opportunities were in the informal sector. However,

5. See Swynnerton, R.J.M. A Plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture, Nairobi 1953.

most of the families whose only source of income is the informal activities such as hawking by the roadside live in human degradation. Their children who should grow in human dignity and make a contribution to the national development, are instead growing up in poverty, illiteracy and debasement.

I also referred you earlier on to the existence of the rural poor who consist of the landless unemployed, and the landless casual labourers. There are also the poor peasants who barely subsist on their small holdings which are not developed due to lack of the necessary inputs and skills. Others are trapped in marginal lands which are only suitable for extensive grazing but are now used for intensive cultivation as a result of population pressure on available land.

I cannot imagine worse living conditions than living in plastic igloos some members of our own society are living in to-day. Yet, we still walk in pride across the nations of the world, proud that we belong to Kenya. Poverty, hunger, lack of shelter and total disregard of human suffering is an integral part of the dominant values in this society. The acceptance of extreme poverty and extreme affluence and wasteful pattern of consumption of the wealthy is an important source of inhuman values and present a limit to the range of values that the schools and families can effectively impress on the youth. Given the short history that these acute class contradictions have taken to evolve, there is no natural reason that justifies any member of this society to engage in wasteful affluence while others are drowning in poverty and misery.

Let me tell you a story of a primary school pupil. A class of Std. 7 pupils in one of the expensive schools that members of the wealthy black Kenyans send their children was asked to write an essay that describes their home and its neighbourhood. One child wrote an excellent article. In the essay the child said that their home is near a village which is on the opposite side of a river where villagers usually bathe. The child rejoices that it is great fun to see black natives bathing naked down in the valley.

Education and Employment

The emergence of the urban poor, the rural poor, the landless and the unemployed which we have just reviewed is not determined by the educational system in this country. What the educational system has done is to interact with an already unequal social-economic system. This is true not only in

in Kenya but in other nations of the world as illustrated by the following observation made by two American scholars, Bowles and Gintis (1976)⁶.

Repression, individual powerlessness, inequality of income and inequality of opportunity do not originate historically in the education system ---- the roots of repression and inequality lie in the structure of modern economic systems..... which deny people participatory control of economic life.

Thus the establishment in Kenya of the modern sector: the industries, estate farms and the small scale farms in the rural areas was not done through education. Rather, the creation and expansion of these economic ventures and services require human labour. It is the nature of the required labour and the ways that it is selected that draw education to the arena of employment provision in the society. An alternative arrangement of the production of goods and services may require for example, tall people and no doubt, the society would provide ways of encouraging the generation of such people. Education therefore only qualifies labour which interacts with capital in the production process and does not create employment.

Education and Employment of School Leavers

The fate of the school leavers attained the dimension of a problem in the early sixties but only affected the primary school leavers then. As indicated already, there were about 85,000 unemployed primary school leavers in 1966 excluding those who went to high school, training institutions and farming. In addition, there were at least 150,000 adults who were ready to take employment if a reasonable chance was offered. The report 'After School What' (1966)⁷ by the National Christian Council of Kenya doubted strongly the ability of the economy to expand and absorb the great number of the unemployed. Nonetheless, the report recommended that village polytechnics (VPs) be established. The VPs are centres that equip primary school leavers with technical and vocational skills which may be used in search of wage or self-employment. However, the establishment of village polytechnics was not a new educational concept in Kenya. Provision for technical and vocational training started way back in the colonial days.

6. Bowles, S. and Gintis, H. Schooling in Capitalist America. Basic Books, Inc., Publishers. New York 1976.

7. See footnote 3 above.

The Binn's Report (1952)⁸ for instance, stressed the importance of teaching agricultural skills. Furthermore, technical skills are generated in the labour force through participation in all sorts of vocational and technical employment such as construction, general repairs, tailoring and furniture making.

The problem of unemployed secondary school leaver appeared in the labour market at a time when the society had not learnt to live with large numbers of unemployed primary school leavers. A tracer study by Kabiru Kinyanjui (1972)⁹ exposed the problem of the unemployed secondary school leavers. Kinyanjui found an increasing proportion of the unemployed secondary school leavers which rose from about 1 per cent to 14.8 per cent for the 1965/67 and 1968 cohorts respectively. The labour market was also found to be more selective in terms of performance in the E.A.C.E. examination. The appearance of the unemployed secondary school leaver was viewed largely as a political problem. The move however, to employ more school leavers through the tripartite agreements between the government, employers and trade unions turned out to be a temporary and limited solution. The false dominant view that the unemployed school leavers are victims of white collar mentality and lack of technical skills led to a concerted effort to establish institutes of science and technology. Technical and industrial education was also introduced in some schools on an experimental basis. These educational reforms solved an immediate political problem by offering a new outlet for the economic aspirations in the society. But their impact on employment creation is severely limited by the restricted market for the technical and vocational skills. Furthermore, there are other similar institutions such as the Kenya Polytechnic in Nairobi that train middle level technicians.

Employment and the New Education Report

The new Report of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies (NCEOP)¹⁰, has a total of 325 recommendations. Most of those recommendations are statements that suggest either expansion, co-ordination or marginal alterations of the existing educational structures and curricular.

8. Colonial Office. A Study of Educational Policy and Practice in British Tropical Africa, "The Binns Report", London 1952.

9. Kabiru Kinyanjui. Education, Training, and Employment of Secondary School Leavers in Kenya. D.P. No. 138, IDS University of Nairobi, 1972.

10. See footnote 1 above.

There are some recommendations however which put great emphasis on the need to change the values and attitudes of school leavers towards employment. The report expects that in future a school leaver should happily walk into a poorly paid manual job in the rural areas while his colleagues secure a highly paid job in the modern sector! The school leaver is also defined in NCEOP report as inadequately prepared with the skills that can be employed productively in the informal employment both in towns and rural areas or in self employment. It is in light of this problem that the report recommends the school system to be lengthened and be made more vocational and technical. The dominant view in the report is therefore that the present value structure, duration and the skills acquired in schools are in-appropriate for the type of employment available to the school leavers.

The enlarged school system of 1960s was a response to the educated manpower needs of the civil service, commercial enterprises and the industrial ventures established to substitute imports. Hypothetically the economy should have continued to absorb all the school leavers into these modern sector jobs. However, this was not the case hence the development of the problem of the unemployed school leaver. The school leavers who are able to secure employment in the civil service, large commercial and industrial enterprises thus in effect joining the elite, escape the condemnation of carrying wrong values and attitudes or even the possession of inappropriate skills. Therefore, the development of both a 'strong attitude that formal education leads to high wage employment' and 'high rates of educational demand created by high income returns that have been expected from formal education', has not necessarily created the unemployment problem as the report suggests. The roots of this problem are in the structure of the society, and particularly in the failure of the economy to industrialise and modernise at a rate that absorbs the entire labour force including the school leavers. The school leavers are an aspect of the labour force and are like everybody else searching for a meaningful share of the national wealth.

The report, however, defines its problem as the unemployed school leavers and recommends that they should be encouraged to identify with the rural areas and the informal sector. The suggested ways to implement this generalised view of the NCEOP is by equipping pupils with national and traditional values and through proper training in crafts and vocational skills. The school leaver who fails to secure employment in the modern sector is therefore being advised to move into a frontier characterised with unemployment, low incomes and general deprivation. However, the proposed

frontier, consisting of farmwork and employment in the informal sector both in the rural and urban areas lacks the capacity and dynamism to absorb the rapidly growing labour force. For instance, in Nyeri it was found that in 1974 there were 104,000 adults available for farmwork for about 70,000 jobs suggesting a 33 per cent rate of unemployment.¹¹ The NCEOP is no doubt aware of this constraint and contradicts itself by recommending that school leavers be directed into the rural areas in a context where the population is rising at the rate of 400,000 - 500,000 per year with only 100,000 being absorbed into urban and rural employment.

The absurdity of the proposal that the school leavers be equipped with attitudes and skills that may help them to survive in poverty is an indication of how desperate it is to continue to offer well paid employment within the prevailing economic structures. Previous educational reforms, the village polytechnics, technical education and the institutes of science and technology have met with limited success. The proposed reform in the report whose main message as we have seen already is to ideologise the national value of poorly paid jobs should be viewed similarly. As I have said elsewhere in this discussion, we cannot sit in a sea of affluence and expect that others will be quite happy to take our advice to move into the poorly developed areas where there is only a little proportion of the national wealth which is not even enough for the large number of people who are there already.

The solutions sought by the new education report are like a witch doctor who mystifies a malaria patient with mere words and charms that he would cure. At best therefore, the report is a political document which inspires hope to the majority of Kenyans that although the modern sector jobs, that is the well paid elite jobs, are no longer available, there are still chances to join the wealthy by working hard in the rural areas and in the informal sector. To succeed however, the report advises, they need a totally different cluster of values and skills from the values and skills that are used in the modern sector. All the recommendations related to employment creation are an elaboration of this view: to encourage traditional values, lengthen the educational system so as to

11. Clayton, E.S. Programming Rural Employment Opportunities in Kenya. International Labour Review vol. 112 Nos. 2-3, August-September 1975.

add to the curriculum technical and pre-vocational courses, to impart a practical bias at all stages of the educational system etc. The report however, fails to quantify the levels of income that employment in the informal sector and rural areas offers. As far as we know, incomes in these economic frontiers are extremely poor and barely supports subsistence compared with the effluence of the modern sector.

The present emphasis on the drilling of pupils on manual skills is an echo of an old concern in the development of education in this country. The annual report of the Education Department of 1926 expressed this problem more clearly:

Just as hard work has been found useful in the training of mentally defective children so the most useful training which the African can receive in his present condition is contact with the material processes --- such as the agriculture handicrafts, sanitation and housework.¹²

The bias that the ruling class had towards the people in 1926 is basically the one expressed in 1976, fifty years later. The only difference is that in 1926 the problem was explained in racial terms while in 1976 the need to train school leavers with agricultural and technical skills is justified in terms of national development, particularly now that there is a developed category of progressive smallscale farmers and businessmen whose level of operation require cheap manual and technical labour.

The global view that the report has taken in assessing and recommending changes in the educational system fails to spell out how the elite children, including the children or grandchildren of the NCEOP members, attending private schools will be made to think positively and finally opt to go out in the rural areas to work as carpenters and technicians for the wealthy farmers. There may not have been the need to work out such a plan for the elite children since the NCEOP report is a document that is pre-occupied with changes that may benefit those members of the Society who cannot take care of themselves. The children of the elite do not fall into this category because they will inherit the modern sector jobs. The recommended changes would only affect 'their' children and not 'ours', according to the dichotomous view 'them' and 'we' that is taken indirectly in the report.

12. Stablar, E. Education Since Uhuru: The Schools of Kenya. Middle town: Wesleyan University Press. 1969.

The underlying concept of 'them' and 'we' implies a clear division of labour whereby the elite children in future will take over the elite jobs in the modern sector while most of the rural and poor urban children will go into self-employment in crafts or be employed by wealthy farmers and businessmen. The trend towards relative closure of economic opportunities that provide acceptable standards of living is politically undesirable in the long run.

It is emphasised in the NCEOP report the need to invest more in the rural areas so that there may be sufficient incomes circulating for the millions of people who depend on agriculture and rural services. It also recommends the need to develop labour intensive technology for use both in the urban and rural areas. The industrial set up is capital intensive already and offers very few additional jobs from year to year. However, the dependent nature of the industrialisation process to international capital makes it very difficult to be reorganised. The employment base may also be expanded by reclaiming the marginal lands and the development of irrigation schemes.

The other major area of manipulation the report proposes is the administrative structure of the school system itself. For example, it is recommended that the primary education be extended to nine years so that pupils may mature and also learn technical and pre-vocational skills. This move however would largely serve to postpone the unemployment problem for only a few years. After all, there are not that many technical jobs as the NCEOP learnt during the investigations:

An even more worrying situation has been the trend of unemployment among products of technical schools Similarly there is increasing evidence that products of village polytechnics and the Christian Industrial Training Centres are also beginning to experience difficulty in getting employment.¹³

In stressing the importance of encouraging pupils to acquire new values and skills that can be utilised in developing the rural areas, the NCEOP report defines the modern sector characterised by highly paid jobs and services as peripheral to the traditional societies. On the contrary, the history of the development of human societies suggests that the future of man lies in the increased production of both industrial and agricultural goods and not in the pre-industrial social formations. I do not therefore think that it is

13. See footnote 1 above.

realistic to expect the dominant economic and social values derived from the modern industrial patterns of production of goods and services will be replaced by a cluster of values and practices, such as the Maasai dance, derived from the traditional systems.

To solve the problem of unemployment in Kenya, will require a co-ordinated reorganisation of the socio-economic institutions and not isolated educational reforms. All the resources, land, capital and labour should be mobilised and their application rationalised so as to generate sufficient wealth that meets the needs of modern life for all of us. Thus as more land is reclaimed and irrigated, the use of high potential land should be reviewed and reorganised so as to be of benefit to the majority. Furthermore, the industrial development partly because it is controlled by international capital has not developed to the point where all the people may be gainfully employed.

CONCLUSION

The main causes of the problems of poverty and unemployment which affect many people in the society are not found in the educational system. Similarly the employment and material wealth that is enjoyed by others is also not created by education. What education does is only to qualify labour which interacts with capital in the process of producing goods and services. The causes of poverty and unemployment are therefore rooted in the political - economy of the society, that is the manner in which the society has arranged for the production of material wealth: type, ownership and control of capital, price of labour and capital, use of surplus wealth etc. It is not possible to solve a basic problem with a secondary solution. To solve the basic problem of poverty and unemployment therefore would require a co-ordinated reorganisation of the socio-economic institutions and not isolated educational reforms.

The enlarged school system of 1960s, for instance, was a response to the educated manpower needs of the civil service, commercial enterprises and industrial ventures. The economy however failed to continue to absorb all the school leavers into these modern sector jobs. It should be emphasised that this is not a problem of the educational system but the failure of the economy to industrialise and modernise at a rate that may absorb the entire labour force including the school leavers. The school leavers are like everybody else searching for a meaningful share of the national wealth.

In economic terms, the modern sector frontier is quickly closing the gates to those who have not yet secured a foothold. The few jobs that arise will increasingly continue to be pre-empted by children with influential origins. The authors of the new education report, the NCEOP, had therefore to define an alternative economic frontier for those who cannot find employment in the modern enclave. The new frontier consists of smallscale farms, production of petty commodities and supply of services in the informal sector both in towns and rural areas. Those who are expected to go into this frontier are advised to acquire technical skills and values that honour poorly paid labour. This frontier exists already and is being exploited by more than 90 per cent of the population. It is also in this sector that the problems of poverty and deprivation are concentrated. The committee, no doubt, would have offered better economic recommendations if there was any commitment to restructure the modern sector so as to encourage a faster rate of national development.